



Intel, Computer Creations* and Polar Inc.

Upgrading a distribution and manufacturing firm's hardware and software functionality to make information available to all

Case Summary

Challenge

Upgrade legacy solutions to make financial data and other relevant information available corporate-wide and in real time for a manufacturing vendor's branch offices and remote users.

Solution

Implement a new accounting software platform to 1) allow access for remote offices 2) fulfill inventory and company finance requirements and 3) meet the technological demands of new, more powerful software and mission critical applications.

Challenge

Polar Inc., a premier distributor of industrial lubricants and chemicals to the manufacturing sector, was running a simple peer-to-peer technology platform with a single workstation acting as the central server. Their aging accounting application and cumbersome data-updating process were bringing down efficiency and productivity exponentially.

They realized something needed to be done. To seek a solution, they sought out their usual solutions specialist, Computer Creations of Centerville, Ohio, a member of the Intel® Premier Provider program.

"They were actually still using a 'Sneaker-Net'..." says Mindi Howard, Sales Representative of Computer Creations. "The remote offices would send floppies to the home office to record the information. They were growing, and they needed to add functionality for the remote offices to be able to capture data to send back to management - and also to be able to tie into the accounting database, which they weren't doing."

Lengthy reporting times, inconsistent backups.

Recalls Craig Stockton, Technical Manager of Computer Creations, "Reports literally took hours to complete, and backups were questionable - to say the least." It was time to evaluate and implement solutions to break through these productivity barriers.

Solution

After a thorough evaluation of the Polar Inc.'s existing hardware and software, the Computer Creations team quickly arrived at the solution - a new infrastructure to add advanced mobility to the technology mix. Far-flung users needed easy remote access to company databases for running time-critical reports. The Computer Creations team responded with a carefully customized solution, utilizing Intel® Pentium® 4 processors supporting Hyper-Threading technology¹, Intel® Xeon™ processors and Intel® Centrino™ mobile technology² to accommodate the client's growing needs.

On the software side, to meet the company's expanding needs in inventory and company finance, an SQL-based accounting application was deployed. Microsoft® Windows® Small Business Server 2000 was chosen as the OS to simultaneously accommodate the SQL-based accounting application, communication and collaboration (via a Microsoft® Exchange server). The client's powerful new applications demanded performance at this level.

According to Computer Creations' Craig Stockton, "A high-performance server was needed to meet the demands of the new software and mission-critical applications." In this case, Computer Creations installed a new server using an Intel® server board SE7501HG2, populated with two Intel Xeon processors at 2.4 GHz, 2GB of DDR RAM and five U320 SCSI drives in a RAID configuration.

After the legacy accounting software was transferred to the new server for data conversion, the power of the new solution became immediately apparent.

"Reports that literally took hours to complete [previously] only took minutes on the new hardware," says Stockton.

A far-reaching focus on remote access.

With the new server and applications configured and brought online, the focus turned to remote access for branch offices and mobile users, on a platform of Microsoft Windows 2000 and Metaframe*. Because up to 20 users would be on the system concurrently, new processor and memory demands

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— Craig Stockton, Technical Manager, Computer Creations

equaled - if not exceeded - that of the Microsoft® Windows® Small Business Server. The solution? Another server, this one based on an Intel® server board SE7505VB2 with two Intel Xeon processors at 2.6 GHz, 2 GB RAM and a SATA drive in a RAID1 configuration installed in an Intel® Server Chassis SC5250E. For security, VPN hardware was installed between the home office and branches, and VPN client software was configured for mobile users.

"The client is amazed at the speed at which reports and remote access are accomplished - and are asking for even more applications from the servers than they would have dreamed possible before," reports Stockton. "The servers have handled the additional load with no impact on performance."

A Premier Provider of Intel technology.

Stockton remembers that, after evaluating the client's needs, the team didn't really even consider competing technology solutions. "We're an Intel® Premier Provider," he says, "and it's just that we can better serve clients with Intel platforms. All our servers have dual Intel Xeon processors - every one that goes out the door."

"We were able to custom-configure a solution for Polar," explains Stockton. "We've got a fairly high-end active directory-type server; then, we have a terminal server that's configured specifically for them. This is one of the benefits of working with Intel versus under-buying or over-buying if you're looking at another boxed Tier 1 product."

From the Dark Ages to leading-edge server performance.

Before working with Computer Creations on the new Intel-server-based configuration, Polar Inc. was "frozen" in a technology time warp, remembers Stockton.

"They came from the Dark Ages, so they are definitely happy with performance," Stockton says of his extremely satisfied client. "There have been no issues with performance or reliability. They had some downtime off and on with their older applications and platforms in place, so they're VERY happy

with that - the reliability and the speed at which they need to process orders." He remembers one of the client's employees originally running a report twice - "because she didn't believe it had run so fast!" That's the kind of performance clients have come to expect from Intel.

A roadmap to an even more productive future.

Even while they were implementing the new solution, the Computer Creations team had an eye on the client's future needs. Says Stockton, "We sort of built in that future possibility by adding more memory than most people normally would - in both CPUs and hard-drive space. After Polar started using the system, we showed them the extra functionality already included, so they started using things like the Microsoft Exchange Server - which they hadn't planned on using. But suddenly, they started using shared calendars, and the remote people wanted to start using it. The server handled it fine."

Lessons Learned

- **The Intel technology platform** can support the access needed by remote offices to tie into account databases, moving beyond simple peer-to-peer solutions.
- **The Intel® Premier Provider program** allows resellers to custom-configure a new technology platform for specific current needs and future growth versus over-buying or under-buying with other boxed Tier 1 technology solutions.
- **End users can dramatically increase the speed** at which they can access information, run reports and other mission-critical tasks with a reliable, high-performance Intel platform.



"We have long considered Computer Creations our primary source of technical intelligence, and this was no exception. We just presented our needs to them - and they designed and implemented the solution."

— Charles H. Puissegur, CPIM, Corporate Development, Polar, Inc.

About Polar, Inc.

Polar, Inc. serves over 700 clients with its metalworking products, industrial lubricants and chemicals. Its customer base, in the industries served, includes automobile and truck parts manufacturers, off-the-road equipment producers, metal forming mills, appliance parts makers, rubber processors, and makers of fabricated products.

About Computer Creations

Computer Creations delivers integrated turnkey solutions for a wide range of small and mid-sized businesses, including hardware, software solutions, service & networking, training & support, and consulting services. Their mission is to ensure that clients maintain their competitive advantage with the support of the latest technology. Their professionals offer years of experience to help clients better understand their technology needs and operate with greater efficiency and productivity.

Intel® Technology

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology¹ 2.60 Ghz/800 MHz

Intel® Xeon™ Processor 2.40 GHz/533 MHz

Intel® Xeon™ Processor 2.66 GHz/533 MHz

Intel® Desktop Board D865GLC

Intel® Server Board SE7501HG2

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¹Hyper-Threading Technology requires a computer system with an Intel® Pentium® 4 processor supporting Hyper-Threading Technology and an HT Technology enabled chipset, BIOS and operating system. Performance will vary depending on the specific hardware and software you use. See <<http://www.intel.com/info/hyperthreading/>> for more information including details on which processors support HT Technology.

²Wireless connectivity and some features may require you to purchase additional software, services or external hardware. Availability of public wireless LAN access points limited and some hotspots may not support PC systems based on Intel Centrino mobile technology running Linux OS. System performance measured by MobileMark* 2002. System performance, battery life, wireless performance and functionality will vary depending on your specific operating system, hardware and software configurations. See http://www.intel.com/products/centrino/more_info for more information.

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